

Writing a Research Paper

The Purpose

- To present your views on a subject.
- To learn, evaluate and utilize various sources of information.
- To use primary and secondary sources that present a wide range of information about the topic.

The Most Important Functions

- Report new or unfamiliar information to your reader.
- Analyze information for meaning, patterns, and connections that explain how to do something or how something works.
- Explore questions and problems.

Limiting Your Topic

- **Ensure that you have a well-defined research question;** this will make it much easier to locate useful material.
- Be careful not to base your essay on information from a single author. Generally, you should use at least six sources to support the argument.

Choosing and Organizing Your Information

- Be sure not to use more information than the amount of space you have permits.
- **Use sources to support what you have to say, not to say the information for you.** Relying heavily on quotations from others can be distracting to the reader and can lessen the credibility of your own argument.
- Chronological organization is effective if you are writing about a topic that occurs over a period of time.
- The compare and contrast approach is an effective one to use when analyzing two similar or different concepts.

Categorizing Research Material

- Use ideas and factual information from other writers to provide additional support for your own views or to provide alternative views that you will argue against.
- Be sure to write clear, focused topic sentences that guide your readers through each step of your argument or analysis.
- If your subject is a work of literature, be sure to provide your own evidence from the work to explain why you agree or disagree with another writer's interpretation. Do not rely on quotations from critics to make important points for you.
- **Include explanations that make the significance of details apparent to your reader** (Stewart, Bullock, and Allen 160).

Creating a Quality Research Paper

- Formulate a thesis by connecting the information you have collected to your research questions, determining similarities and differences between your own ideas and information from secondary sources (Stewart, Bullock, and Allen 169).
- **Connect the information you have gathered to your own thinking throughout the research paper.**
- Ensure that each of your paragraphs is on topic; remember that a paragraph is about one idea. You may need to subdivide information, condense quotations, or delete irrelevant material.
- When writing your research paper, be sure to utilize material that both supports your thesis and strengthens your main point. Place important points in your own words, but also include evidence to support your claims.
- **To ensure that your claims are properly conveyed to your reader, make it easy for readers to see which ideas are yours and which come from other sources** (Stewart, Bullock, and Allen 169).

References

Faigley, L., Graves, R. & Graves, H. (2008). *The brief penguin handbook* (Canadian ed.). Toronto: Pearson Education Canada.

Stewart, K. L., Bullock, C. J., & Allen, M. E. (1998). *Essay writing for Canadian students* (4th ed.). Scarborough: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc.